Best Practices: Initiating Evidence-Based, Data-Driven Change  
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Problem:  
In the current economic, healthcare reform, and nurse practice environments, it is critical that organizations ascertain their baseline status for high risk, high volume quality-care indicators in order to evaluate that provided care is based on the most recent evidence; to identify nursing practices not meeting current best practice standards; and to identify interventions for institutional or systems change.

Evidence:  
The literature supports that translating and integrating validated best practice recommendations will result in improved nursing practice and optimal patient outcomes.

Strategy:  
National benchmarks for a number of “nurse sensitive” patient outcomes may not encompass practice and patient care challenges unique to an organization. Prevalence studies facilitate benchmarking by establishing a baseline for managing clinical outcomes.

Practice Change:  
In addition to confirming that current nursing practices are evidence-based, data are used to target interventions for improved outcomes. After each survey, interventions tailored to findings are implemented. Results of implemented programs are assessed to identify practice deficits and sustain improvements.

Evaluation:  
A bi-annual, longitudinal prevalence survey approach applies chart review, patient interview and observation methodology using a convenience sample of adults admitted for greater than 24 hours. The current state of evidence-based interventions for eight high-volume, high-risk quality care indicators are evaluated.

Results:  
Over four evaluative periods, measurable improvements have been achieved for each of the eight indicators. In addition to knowledge deficits, system barriers including equipment, supplies, and policies and procedures were identified.

Recommendations:  
An advantage of prevalence surveys is that useful data can be generated in a time- and cost- efficient manner to assist organizations in confirming and validating areas of best practice as well as identifying areas for improvement.

Lessons Learned:  
Nurses involved in direct patient care intuitively identify areas of practice and patient care concern unique to their settings. Involving clinical nurses in assessment and evaluation of nursing practice leads to increased awareness and engagement in identifying specific interventions to improve evidence-based care.

Bibliography:  